



State Capitol | Lansing, Michigan 48913

PH (517) 373.1725 | FAX (517) 373.0741

www.senate.michigan.gov/gop/senator/mcmanus/

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Contact: Patrick Kane
517-373-1725

Michigan Senate Acts to Halt Invasion of Asian Carp Into Great Lakes

LANSING - The Michigan Senate today approved a \$100,000 challenge grant program to help keep invasive species like the Asian carp out of the Great Lakes, announced Sen. Michelle McManus, R-Lake Leelanau.

“Species like the Asian carp could devastate the ecosystems in the Great Lakes,” said McManus, chair of the conference committee in charge of the Department of Environmental Quality budget. “Through these challenge grants, we can help keep such species out and preserve the lakes as we know them for generations to come.”

Under the proposal, the state would use \$100,000 from the Michigan Great Lakes Protection Fund to create the program. The challenge grants would be used to encourage companies in Michigan and other state governments from throughout the Great Lakes basin to help fund the construction of a fish barrier in Illinois.

“There is no greater threat to Michigan’s Great Lakes than the invasion of aquatic nuisance species. That is why the Legislature has made protecting our waters one of its top priorities,” said Senate Majority Leader Ken Sikkema, R-Wyoming. “Preventing the Asian carp from ever getting in is vital. As the old saying goes, the best defense is a good offense.”

The fish barrier is being built on the Chicago Ship and Sanitary Canal, which connects the Mississippi River to the Great Lakes. Currently, the carp are in the canal and have been sighted approximately 40 miles from Lake Michigan. Construction began in July, but an additional \$1.8 million is needed to complete the project.

“It is critical that the basin states meet this challenge,” said Sen. Patty Birkholz, R-Saugatuck Township, chair of the Senate Natural Resources Committee. “This may be the single most important step we take this year to protect our lakes.”

Asian carp pose a significant threat to the Great Lakes because of their size, appetite and ability to rapidly reproduce. Asian carp can grow to 100 pounds and up to four feet in length. They are well-suited to the cold water climate of the Great Lakes region, which is similar to their native Eastern Hemisphere habitats. It is expected that they would compete for food with the valuable sport and commercial fish. If they entered the system, they would likely become a dominant species in the Great Lakes.

The proposal now goes to the House for consideration.

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